WILLIAM BLAKE

XVII DESIGNS TO
THORNTON'S VIRGIL

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XVII DESIGNS TO
THORNTON'S VIRGIL

Re-engraved time after time,
Ever in their youthful prime,
My designs unchanged remain ;
Time may rage, but rage in vain ;
For above Time's troubled fountains,
On the great Atlantic mountains,
In my golden house on high,
There they shine eternally.

WILLIAM BLAKE

450 copies of this book have been printed on Van Gelder hand-made paper, and the type distributed.

WILLIAM BLAKE

XVII DESIGNS TO THORNTON'S VIRGIL
REPRODUCED FROM THE
ORIGINAL WOODCUTS
MDCCCXXI

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INTRODUCTION

The epoch ends, the world is still.
The age has talk'd and work'd its fill —
The famous orators have shone,
The famous poets sung and gone. . . .
The famous painters fill'd their wall,
The famous critics judged it all. . . .
And in the after-silence sweet,
Now strifes are hush'd, our ears doth meet,
Ascending pure, the bell-like fame
Of this or that down-trodden name. . . .
And o'er the plain, where the dead age
Did its now silent warfare wage —
O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,
Where many a splendour finds its tomb,
Many spent fames and fallen mights —
The one or two immortal lights
Rise slowly up into the sky
To shine there everlastingly.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

INTRODUCTION

I

ILLIAM BLAKE — poet, artist, seer — was born 28th of November, 1757, and died 12th of August, 1827. Any attempt at setting forth what stands revealed for all time in this man's life and creations would here be out of place. From the years that were to fuse and mould his genius:

> "The dear and wished for years,
> "Who each one in a gracious hand appears
> "To bear a gift for mortals old or young"—

he has left an early fragment of verse unequaled for its childlike prescience:

> "The Angel that presided o'er my birth,
> "Said: 'Little creature, formed of joy and mirth,
> "'Go, love without the help of anything on earth.'"

And when "the sweet, sad years," had brought their gifts and gone, dedicated as they were to the service of undying Beauty, his last words transcribed by a friend and disciple are of equal joy and solemn

assurance: "He said he was going to that country "he had all his life wished to see, and expressed "himself happy, hoping for salvation through Jesus "Christ. Just before he died his countenance be- "came fair, his eyes brightened, and he burst out "into singing of the things he saw in heaven."

Between such widely separated periods of Youth and Age what a world of imagination and of manifold achievement confronts us! Rightly apprehended these two utterances interpret very nearly all that went to the making of William Blake.

Not biography, however—which needs no aid from us — but a little series of woodcuts contributed by Blake to *Thornton's Virgil* is the object of this introduction. It seems that the time has come to rescue these unique designs from the pages of an almost forgotten book, where, side by side with the wretched hack work of that day, they remain in sad estate; known indeed to enthusiasts and collectors, but to book lovers in general practically inaccessible. Their story — the story of Blake's first, and, as it will prove, his last attempt at wood-block cutting — has been told by Alexander Gilchrist and to this we now invite attention.

II

" Blake was, in 1820–21, employed by Dr. Thorn-
" ton for some illustrations to the Doctor's School
" *Virgil*—Virgil's *Pastorals*, that is. The result of
" the commission was a series of designs among the
" most beautiful and original of Blake's perform-
" ances. These are the small woodcuts to Ambrose
" Philips' imitation of Virgil's first *Eclogue:* designs
" simple, quaint, poetic, charged with the very spirit
" of pastoral.

" Dr. Thornton, son of Bonnell Thornton of
" humorous memory, colleague with Colman in
" *The Connoisseur*, was a physician and botanist of
" note, in his day. He was the author of several
" very expensively illustrated folios and quartos on
" botany: *A New Illustration of the Sexual System*
" *of Linnæus*, 1797: *The Temple of Flora, or Garden*
" *of the Poet, Painter, and Philosopher*, and other
" similar productions about botany in its picturesque
" aspect; costly books, illustrated in colours, which
" impoverished their amiable projector.

" More successful in its generation was the
" Doctor's edition of the *Pastorals* of Virgil, 'with a
" 'course of English reading adapted for schools,'
" and other explanatory helps. All which was de-
" signed to enable youth 'to acquire ideas as well
" 'as words,' with 'ease to the master and delight
" 'to the scholar.' One means to this end was ulti-
" mately added in a series of illustrative woodcuts.
" The first edition of 1812 had none: illustrations
" were issued as a supplementary volume in 1814.
" In the second edition of 1819 the two were

"incorporated. In this third edition of 1821 the "illustrations were increased to as many as two "hundred and thirty, including these from Blake's "hand.'

"And hereby hangs a tale. Blake made twenty "drawings to illustrate the *Pastorals* of Philips, "introduced by Thornton into his 'course' of Virgil "reading. From these he executed seventeen wood "blocks, the first he had ever cut, and, as they will "prove, the last. The rough, unconventional work "of a mere 'prentice hand to the art of wood-"engraving, they are, in effect, vigorous and artist-"like, recalling the doings of Albert Dürer and "the early masters, whose aim was to give ideas, "not pretty language. When he sent in these "seventeen the publishers, unused to so daring a "style, were taken aback, and declared 'this man "'must do no more;' nay, were for having all "he *had* done re-cut by one of their regular "hands. The very engravers received them with "derision, crying out in the words of the critic, "'This will never do.' Blake's merits, seldom "wholly hidden from his artist contemporaries, "were always impenetrably dark to the book and "print selling genus.

"Dr. Thornton had, in his various undertakings, "been munificent to artists to an extent which, as "we have said, brought him to poverty. But he had, "himself, no knowledge of art, and, despite kind "intentions, was disposed to take his publishers' "view. However, it fortunately happened that "meeting one day several artists at Mr. Aders' "table, — Lawrence, James Ward, Linnell, and

"others,—conversation fell on the Virgil. All pres-
"ent expressed warm admiration of Blake's art, and
"of those designs and woodcuts in particular. By
"such competent authority reassured, if also puz-
"zled, the good Doctor began to think there must
"be more in them than he and his publishers could
"discern. The contemplated sacrifice of the blocks
"already cut was averted. The three other designs,
"however, had been engraved by another, nameless
"hand: those illustrative of the three 'comparisons'
"in the last stanza but one of Philips' *Pastorals*.
"Wretched, jejune caricatures of the beautiful orig-
"inals they proved, scarce any trace of Blake being
"left.

"To conciliate the outraged arts, Dr. Thornton
"introduced the designs with an apology. 'The
"'illustrations of this English Pastoral are by the
"'famous BLAKE, the illustrator of Young's *Night*
"'*Thoughts*, and Blair's *Grave;* who designed and
"'engraved them himself. This is mentioned as
"'they display less of art than of genius, and are
"'much admired by some eminent painters.'

"One of the designs, engraved by Blake, was re-
"cut among the engravers, who scrupled not, by
"way of showing what it ought to have been, to
"smooth down and conventionalize the design
"itself; reducing a poetic, typical composition to
"mere commonplace, 'to meet the public taste.'
"This as an earnest of what had been contemplated
"for the whole series. The amendment was not
"adopted by Thornton. Both versions may be seen
"in the *Athenæum* for January 21st, 1843; where,
"in the course of a very intelligent article on the

"true principles of wood-engraving, they are intro-
"duced, with other cuts from Holbein, &c., to illus-
"trate the writer's just argument: that 'amid all
" 'drawbacks there exists a power in the work of
" 'the man of genius which no one but himself can
" 'utter fully;' and that 'there is an authentic
" 'manifestation of feeling in an author's own work,
" 'which endears it to all who can sympathize with
" 'art, and reconciles all its defects. Blake's rude
" 'work,' adds the critic, 'utterly without preten-
" 'sion, too, as an engraving, the merest attempt of

BLAKE'S THIRD DESIGN AS RECUT BY OTHER HANDS.

" 'a fresh apprentice, is a work of genius; whilst
" 'the latter'— the doctored cut —'is but a piece of
" 'smooth, tame mechanism.'

"The more these remarkable designs are seen,
"the more power do they exert over the mind.
"With few lines, and the simplest, rudest hints of
"natural objects, they appeal to the imagination
"direct, not the memory; setting before us con-
"densed, typical ideas. Strange to think of Blake,
"shut up in dingy, gardenless South Molton Street,
"designing such pastorals! His mind must have
"been impregnated with rural images, enabling him,

"without immediate reference to Nature, to throw "off these beautiful suggestions, so pastoral in feel- "ing, of Arcadian shepherds and their flocks, under "the broad setting sun or tranquil moon. As "Thornton's purpose was to give his young readers "pictured images of his author's words, the designs "accompany the poem literally, and line for line. "Thenot addresses Colinet, who leans, lonesome, "against a tree, crook in hand, and sheep beside; "and so on.

"The original designs, in sepia, are of much del- "icacy and grace. Their expression and drawing "are a little distorted in the transference to wood, "even under Blake's own hands. The blocks, "moreover, proved in the first instance, too wide "for the page, and were, irrespective of the compo- "sition, summarily cut down to the requisite size by "the publishers. They are now, together with the "drawings, in the possession of Mr. Linnell, who "has kindly permitted impressions from three of "them [2] to be taken for the present work.

"Dr. Thornton found further employment for "Blake in etchings, scattered through the two vol- "umes of 1821, from antique busts: Theocritus, "Virgil, Augustus, Agrippa, Julius Cæsar, Epicurus; "task-work Blake well and honestly performed. A "drawing of his, from Poussin's *Polyphème*, was put "into Byfield's hands to engrave; which the latter "did, poorly enough. As for the rest of the two "hundred and thirty cuts, though executed by some "of the best wood engravers of the time, they are, "with the exception of one or two by Bewick and "Thurston, of singularly laughable calibre. The

"designers obviously thought they could not be too "puerile in addressing boys. The old, rude wood-"cuts to Croxall's *Æsop* are respectable works "of art, compared with these. It is a curious "practical satire on the opinion of Blake the engrav-"ers had, that the book, which has become scarce, "is seldom looked at now but for Blake's slight "share in it."[3]

III

Our reprint from Gilchrist's noble contribution to Blake biography may be extended and strengthened by another bit of evidence regarding the artistic significance of these Virgilian designs. As early as 1824 Samuel Palmer had written in one of his Note-books :

" I sat down with Mr. Blake's Thornton's *Virgil* " woodcuts before me, thinking to give to their " merits my feeble testimony. I happened first to " think of their sentiment. They are visions of " little dells, and nooks, and corners of Paradise ; " models of the exquisitest pitch of intense poetry. " I thought of their light and shade, and looking " upon them I found no word to describe it. In- " tense depth, solemnity, and vivid brilliancy only " coldly and partially describe them. There is in all " such a mystic and dreamy glimmer as penetrates " and kindles the inmost soul, and gives complete " and unreserved delight, unlike the gaudy daylight " of this world." [4]

Further on in the *Life and Letters*, we are told that Palmer's ideal of wood-cutting " will be found " embodied in Blake's own blocks for Thornton's " edition of Virgil's *Pastorals*. These, in my father's " opinion, were 'perhaps the most intense gems of " ' bucolic sentiment in the whole range of art,' " and 'utterly unique.' He spoke of them as his " 'heart's delight,' and contended that, unlike the " skilful modern wood engravings, they showed the " true genius of the art — those essential qualities " which should distinguish it from other arts. One

"of the chief treasures of his 'Curiosity Portfolio' "was a sheet or two of early proofs from these "little blocks, printed and signed by Blake in his "presence."

That Samuel Palmer was profoundly influenced by Blake is well known.[5] There can be as little doubt that his etchings to Virgil's *Eclogues* are brilliant derivations from the earlier woodcuts of his friend and master, rendered with what exquisite effects of their own, admirers of Palmer do not need to be told.[6]

One might hazard the remark that in a subtle, remote and undeveloped manner, we are reminded of another and later master in a different medium of expression — of Thomas Hardy and his presentation in literature of pastoral themes.

Last of all, there is the same archaic touch observable in Blake's inventions to the book of *Job*, especially to be noted in the final illustration of that wondrous series, solemnized and subdued as befitted its more august subject, which recalls, with a pathos and a poetry all its own, his earlier, but not less lovely and characteristic, designs — these rude, little pastoral cuts now reproduced in their entirety for the first time.

XVII DESIGNS TO
THORNTON'S VIRGIL

I

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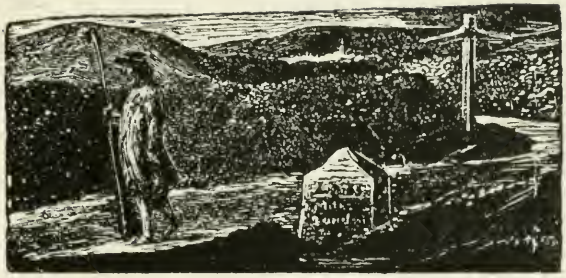
VIII



IX

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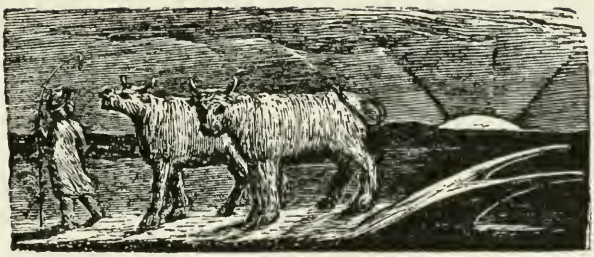

XVII

THENOT AND COLINET

AN ECLOGUE

The *XVII Designs*, as originally printed in Thornton's *Virgil*, were four on a leaf, the frontispiece alone being on a page by itself. The result can easily be conjectured. Without proper margins the cuts were almost invariably cropped by the binder. Yet such was their rare merit that even in this state they compelled the admiration of all competent judges.

Thornton took some liberties with Philips' *Pastoral* which we have corrected according to the text of the 1748 edition.

The numbers in parentheses at verse endings indicate with sufficient clearness the relation of the *Designs* to the poem.

THENOT AND COLINET

AN ECLOGUE

THENOT. COLINET.

THENOT.

IS it not Colinet I lonesome see,
Leaning with folded arms against the tree?
Or is it age of late bedims my sight?
'Tis Colinet, indeed, in woeful plight.
Thy cloudy look why melting into tears,
Unseemly, now the sky so bright appears?
Why in this mournful manner art thou found,
Unthankful lad, when all things smile around?
Or hear'st not lark and linnet jointly sing,
Their notes blithe-warbling to salute the spring? (1)

COLINET.

Though blithe their notes, not so my wayward fate;
Nor lark would sing, nor linnet, in my state.
Each creature, Thenot, to his task is born,
As they to mirth and musick, I to mourn.

Waking, at midnight, I my woes renew,
My tears oft mingling with the falling dew. (II)

THENOT.

Small cause, I ween, has lusty youth to plain ;
Or who may, then, the weight of eld sustain,
When every slackening nerve begins to fail,
And the load presseth as our days prevail ?
Yet, though with years my body downward tend,
As trees beneath their fruit, in autumn, bend
Spite of my snowy head and icy veins,
My mind a cheerful temper still retains :
And why should man, mishap what will, repine,
Sour every sweet, and mix with tears his wine ?
But tell me then : it may relieve thy woe,
To let a friend thine inward ailment know. (III)

COLINET.

Idly 'twill waste thee, Thenot, the whole day,
Should'st thou give ear to all my grief can say.
Thine ewes will wander ; and the heedless lambs,
In loud complaints, require their absent dams. (IV)

THENOT.

See Lightfoot ; he shall tend them close : and I,
'Tween whiles, across the plain will glance mine eye.

COLINET.

Where to begin I know not, where to end. (V)
Doth there one smiling hour my youth attend ?
Though few my days, as well my follies show,
Yet are those days all clouded o'er with woe :
No happy gleam of sunshine doth appear,
My lowering sky, and wintry months, to chear.

My piteous plight in yonder naked tree,
Which bears the thunder-scar, too plain I see:
Quite destitute it stands of shelter kind,
The mark of storms, and sport of every wind:
The riven trunk feels not th' approach of spring;
Nor birds among the leafless branches sing:
No more, beneath thy shade, shall shepherds throng
With jocund tale, or pipe, or pleasing song.
Ill-fated tree! and more ill-fated I!
From thee, from me, alike the shepherds fly. (VI)

THENOT.

Sure thou in hapless hour of time wast born,
When blighting mildews spoil the rising corn,
Or blasting winds o'er blossom'd hedge-rows pass,
To kill the promis'd fruits, and scorch the grass,
Or when the moon by wizard charm'd, foreshows,
Blood-stain'd in foul eclipse, impending woes.
Untimely born, ill-luck betides thee still. (VII)

COLINET.

And can there, Thenot, be a greater Ill?

THENOT.

Nor fox, nor wolf, nor rot among our sheep:
From these good shepherd's care his flock may keep:
Against ill-luck, alas! all forecast fails;
Nor toil by day, nor watch by night, avails.

COLINET.

Ah me, the while! ah me, the luckless day!
Ah luckless lad! befits me more to say.
Unhappy hour! when, fresh in youthful bud,
I left, Sabrina fair, thy silvery flood.

Ah, silly I ! more silly than my sheep,
Which, on thy flowery banks, I wont to keep.
Sweet are thy banks ! Oh, when shall I, once more,
With ravish'd eyes review thine amell'd shore ?
When, in the crystal of thy water, scan
Each feature faded, and my colour wan ?
When shall I see my hut, the small abode
Myself did raise, and cover o'er with sod ?
Small though it be, a mean and humble cell,
Yet is there room for peace, and me, to dwell. (VIII)

THENOT.

And what enticement charm'd thee, far away,
From thy lov'd home, and led thy heart astray ? (IX)

COLINET.

A lewd desire, strange lands and swains to know :
Ah God ! that ever I should covet woe.
With wandering feet unblest, and fond of fame,
I sought I know not what besides a name.

THENOT.

Or, sooth to say, didst thou not hither rome
In search of gains more plenty than at home ?
A rolling stone is, ever, bare of moss ;
And, to their cost, green years old proverbs cross. (X)

COLINET.

Small need there was, in random search of gain,
To drive my pining flock athwart the plain,
To distant Cam. Fine gain at length, I trow,
To hoard up to myself such deal of woe !
My sheep quite spent, through travel and ill-fare,
And, like their keeper, ragged grown and bare,

The damp, cold greensward, for my nightly bed,
And some slaunt willow's trunk to rest my head.
Hard is to bear of pinching cold the pain;
And hard is want to the unpracticed swain:
But neither want, nor pinching cold, is hard,
To blasting storms of calumny compar'd:
Unkind as hail it falls; the pelting shower
Destroys the tender herb, and budding flower. (XI)

THENOT.

Slander we shepherds count the vilest wrong:
And what wounds sorer than an evil tongue?

COLINET.

Untoward lads, the wanton imps of spite,
Make mock of all the ditties I indite.
In vain, O Colinet, thy pipe, so shrill,
Charms every vale, and gladdens every hill:
In vain thou seek'st the coverings of the grove,
In the cool shade to sing the pains of love:
Sing what thou wilt, ill-nature will prevail;
And every elf hath skill enough to rail:
But yet, though poor and artless be my vein,
Menalcas seems to like my simple strain:
And, while that HE delighteth in my song,
Which to the good Menalcas doth belong,
Nor night, nor day, shall my rude musick cease;
I ask no more, so I Menalcas please. (XII)

THENOT.

Menalcas, lord of these fair, fertile, plains,
Preserves the sheep, and o'er the shepherds reigns:
For him our yearly wakes, and feasts, we hold,
And choose the fairest firstling from the fold:

He, good to all, who Good deserve, shall give
Thy flock to feed, and thee at ease to live,
Shall curb the malice of unbridled tongues,
And bounteously reward thy rural songs. (XIII)

COLINET.

First, then, shall lightsome birds forget to fly,
The briny ocean turn to pastures dry,
And every rapid river cease to flow,
'Ere I unmindful of Menalcas grow.

THENOT.

This night thy care with me forget, and fold
Thy flock with mine, to ward th' injurious cold. (XIV)
New milk, and clouted cream, mild cheese and curd,
With some remaining fruit of last year's hoard,
Shall be our evening fare, and, for the night,
Sweet herbs and moss, which gentle sleep invite: (XV)
And now behold the sun's departing ray,
O'er yonder hill, the sign of ebbing day:
With songs the jovial hinds return from plow; (XVI)
And unyok'd heifers, loitering homeward, low. (XVII)

AMBROSE PHILIPS
(1675-1749)

THE FIRST ECLOGUE OF VIRGIL

THE ARGUMENT.

Tityrus and Melibœus converse about their various fortune; the one exiled, the other restored to his patrimony.

Amidst the conflict of opinion as to the persons intended in this Eclogue, and leaving the question of allegory in those of Galatea and Amaryllis, it may be viewed as a thank-offering to Augustus; a persuasive to extend to others the justice he had rendered to Virgil in the restitution of his inheritance, and incidentally, as a protest against military outrage and the national corruption which engenders civil war.

Mantua had not sided against Octavius, yet the soldiers of the triumvirate seized Mantuan estates and expelled the owners: among these was Virgil, to whom, perhaps through the intercession of Mæcenas and Varus, Cæsar restored his patrimony; which, at last, with difficulty and some peril was recovered.

TITYRUS.

AN ECLOGUE.

TITYRUS. MELIBŒUS.

MELIBŒUS.

YOU, Tityrus, at ease, carelessly laid
In covert of a beech tree's ample shade
Muse on a slender oat the rustic lay:
We our sweet native fields leave far away;
We fly our country: pleasantly the while
Do you the vacant summer hours beguile,
Making the woods, and all the upland ground,
With lovely Amaryllis' name resound.

TITYRUS.

O Melibœus, this tranquillity
A God hath wrought; for never less may I
Conceive him: oft a firstling shall imbrue
His altars to whom all the fold is due:
He bids me, while my browsing heifers rove,
Temper at will the mellow reeds I love.

MELIBŒUS.

No envy moves me, rather I admire ;
For to your doors almost, pillage and fire
Have wasted ; arms and civil discords jar.
Lo, sick myself, I drive these goats afar ;
And this, this ewe, can scarce lead on, for now
Beside the plot where yonder hazels grow,
Yeaning twin kids, the promise of the flock,
Alas ! she left them on the naked rock.
And I remember, thoughtless then and blind,
Of my stout oaks how oft the scatter'd rind,
Struck by heaven's fire, would these ill times foreshow,
These, from some hollow trunk, the baleful crow,
Unheeded. But declare, good Tityrus,
Who this may be, what god protects you thus.

TITYRUS.

The city, stately Rome, I, foolish, thought
Like this of ours, whither we oft have brought
Our tumbrils, or driven on the butting lambs.
As whelps to dogs, as kids are like their dams,
So I, comparing with large things the small,
Thought Mantua like the greater capital :
But Rome lifts over these her towery head,
As cypresses o'erlook the shrubby mead.

MELIBŒUS.

What business brought you to the Roman state ?

TITYRUS.

Liberty, Melibœus ! She, though late,
Did yet regard me, when inert and worn,
First from my beard some whiter hairs were shorn.

Still she regarded me, so long bereft :
'Twas when the luckless Galatea left,
And Amaryllis charm'd : till then were vain
All hope of liberty, all care of gain.
Fair flocks were fed in fold or on the down,
Fat cheeses press'd for the ungrateful town,
Yet I return'd scarce better than I went,
With nimble gold, no sooner earn'd than spent.

MELIBŒUS.

I marvell'd, Amaryllis, while you lay
Dejected, calling on the gods all day,
For whom it was you left so charily
The ruddiest apples hanging on the tree.
Tityrus was gone : you thought the airy pine
Sigh'd " Tityrus," and the dishevell'd vine
And vacant grove ; and could his name recall,
Syllabled in the fountain and the fall.

TITYRUS.

What could I do ? For while I linger'd here,
My thraldom I could neither break nor bear,
Nor find a present aid : I saw in Rome
The godlike youth : to him, from our old home,
Yearly, for twice six days, the altars smoke —
" Swains, feed as wont your kine," he said, " and yoke
" Your lusty steers."

MELIBŒUS.

O fortunate old man !
Then these ancestral fields are yours again
And wide enough for you. Though naked stone,
And marsh with slimy rush, abut upon

The lowlands, yet your pregnant ewes shall try
No unproved forage; neighbouring flocks, too nigh,
Strike no contagion, nor infect the young:
O fortunate, who now at last, among
Known streams and sacred fountain-heads have found
A shelter and a shade on your own ground.
Hyblæan bees about your hedges taste
The flowering willows, and their shadow cast
Invites the day-dream ere warm days are sped;
You listen to the music overhead;
Innumerous wings a drowsy concert keep,
And lightly murmuring whisper you to sleep.
Awaked, you hear the jocund vinedresser
Under the rock side carolling to air;
Fatlings and fowl your teeming barn-yard fill,
Nor cease your wood-pigeons their crooning still,
Nor turtles from the old aërial elm.

TITYRUS.

The sounds and seas will cast their fish, or whelm
The forked hills, the stags on ether browse,
Or earth's firm continent her lands transpose;
Of Arar's current shall the Parthian drink,
Athirst, the German kneel by Tigris' brink,
Ere I forget or lightly can recall
His gracious image who hath given me all.

MELIBŒUS.

But we must hence, or to the Libyan sand,
Or frozen Scythia; some, the Cretan strand
Explore of swift Oaxes; others dare
The utmost coast where scythed Britons fare;
A place apart from all the world, they say,
An oaken forest girt with headlands grey.

TITYRUS

Have we a distant hope ; shall I at last
Return, when travel has confused the past,
From bleak exile, and wondering at the change
Come, at a turn, upon the byres, the grange,
Lowly and thatch'd with turf, where I was born ;
A realm to me, a loss I vainly mourn,
Thrust headlong by a soldier from the soil
Rich with my kindred's immemorial toil ?
For him to sickle were these fallows plough'd ;
Shall the barbarian eat the crops we sow'd ;
My standing crop an alien robber sweep,
Clad in the stolen fleeces of my sheep ?
Ah, see the ruin civil discords yield,
The heirs for whom our fathers dress'd the field,
Now, Melibœus, graft your pears again ;
Now to the measured poles your vintage train !
Go, my once happy flock, and my ewe goats !
No more at dawn, loosed from your hurdle cotes,
You scatter all the dew ; nor idly prone,
Where vines the dusky cavern have o'ergrown,
I watch you hanging on the cliffs at noon,
Or pipe you home beneath the rising moon ;
Never soft verse be warbled more ; the flute
Is broken and the gamesome reeds are mute.
No more, my goats, before your sire I go,
And lead you where the bitter sallows grow,
Feed from the hand or heap your winter store,
The flowery cytisus you crop no more.

TITYRUS.

Yet stay with us to-night, our pens will keep
Your goats, and here you may securely sleep.

TITYRUS

Ripe apples are our supper, cream unstirr'd,
Boil'd chestnuts, plenty of the sweeten'd curd:
See, glimmering in the West, the homeward star;
And from the crest of upland towns afar,
The hearth-smoke rise; while gathering over all,
From the steep mountains greater shadows fall.

SAMUEL PALMER.
(1805-1881)

NOTES

NOTES

Note 1 — Page xiv

The Pastorals of Virgil, with a course of English Reading, adapted for schools: in which all the proper facilities are given, enabling youth to acquire the Latin Language, in the shortest period of time. Illustrated by 230 *Engravings. By Robert John Thornton, M. D.* Third Edition, 2 Vols., 12mo., London, 1821.

Note 2 — Page xvii

See numbers V, VI and IX of the series of *Designs*. "Even "when colour is used in the engraver's sense of black "and white alone, these comminglings as mystic as twi- "light retain their power over the eye and fancy. Opposite to "page 320, vol. I, of Blake's *Life* there are three woodcuts "which fully illustrate our meaning. They were done to "ornament the *Pastorals* of Virgil, edited by Dr. Thornton, "and are of a degree of rudeness apparently verging on inca- "pacity. Yet we would venture to ask any competent judge "whether an effect in a high degree poetic is not produced by "the total sentiment of the design. To our eye they seem to "contain a germ of that grandeur and sense of awe and power "of landscape which in some of his works John Linnell has "carried out so finely, where dawn-lights dream over tranquil "folds or evening slowly leaves the valley flock to the peace "of night. . . . And so we have these three grand but uncouth

" designs still preserved to us, in one of which the shepherd is " eloquent among the ewes and sucking lambs, another " where a traveller walks solemnly on among the hills alone, " while in a third ' the young moon with the old moon in her " ' arms ' rises over fallen ranks of wheat. Thought can not " fathom the secret of their power, and yet the power is " there."—*The Literary Works of James Smetham, edited by William Davies*, London, 1893, pp. 130–132.

" In the first (V), the remote sweet curve of hill against a sky " filled with evening, seen far above the rows of folded sheep, " may recall a splendid former design in the ' Blair.' In the " second (IX), which perhaps has lost more than any in course " of transference, the distance of winding road and deepening " gorge, woods and downs and lighted windy sky, is among " the noblest inventions of imaginative landscape. Highest " of all in poetical quality I should class the third (VI) design. " Upon the first two, symbolic as they are of vision and of " pilgrimage, the shadow of peace is cast like a garment; rest " lies upon them as a covering. In the third, a splendour of " sweet and turbulent moonlight falls across blown bowed " hedgerows, over the gnarled and labouring branches of a " tough tortuous oak, upon soft ears of laid corn like long " low waves without ripple or roll; every bruised blade dis- " tinct and patient, every leaf quivering and straightened out " in the hard wind. The stormy beauty of this design, the " noble motion and passion in all parts of it, are as noticeable " as its tender sense of detail and grace in effect of light. " Not a star shows about the moon; and the dark hollow " half of her glimmering shell, emptied and eclipsed, is faint " upon the deep air. The fire in her crescent burns high " across the drift of wind. Blake's touch in this appears to " me curiously just and perfect; the moon does not seem to " quail or flicker as a star would; but one may feel and see, " as it were, the wind passing beneath her; amid the fierce " fluctuation of heaven in the full breath of tempest, blown " upon with all the strength of the night, she stands firm in " the race of winds, where no lesser star can stand; she hangs " high in clear space, pure of cloud; but no likeness of the " low-hung labouring moon, no blurred and blinking planet

"with edges blotted and soiled in fitful vapour, would have "given so splendid a sense of storm as this white triumphal "light seen above the wind. Small and rough as these half-"engraved designs may be, it is difficult to express in words all "that is latent, even all that is evident, in the best of them. "Poets and painters of Blake's kind can put enough into the "slightest and swiftest work they do to baffle critics and irri-"tate pretenders." — Algernon Charles Swinburne, *William Blake: A Critical Essay, Octavo, London,* 1868, *pp.* 66, 67. It is to be regretted that neither Swinburne nor Smetham saw fit to describe the entire series of cuts.

NOTE 3 — PAGE XVIII

Life of William Blake with selections from his Poems and other Writings by Alexander Gilchrist. 2 vols., octavo, London, 1880. Vol. I, pp. 317-320. The first edition was published in 1863.

See also *The Works of William Blake, Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical, edited with lithographs of the illustrated "Prophetic Books," and a Memoir and Interpretation by Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats.* 3 vols., octavo, London, 1893.

NOTE 4 — PAGE XIX

See *The Life and Letters of Samuel Palmer, Painter and Etcher*, edited by his son, A. H. Palmer, Octavo, London, 1892, pp. 15, 16.

"In 1821 Blake had performed another work of moment, "his first and last wood-engravings. These were to illustrate "Philips' imitation of Virgil's first pastoral, republished by "Dr. Thornton, a physician and botanist. Blake was a novice "in this branch of art, and the cuts answer to Dr. Thornton's "own description of them: 'They display less of art than of "'genius.' But nothing could more effectually confirm the "principle enunciated by their critic in the *Athenæum*: "'Amid all drawbacks there exists a power in the work "'of the man of genius which no one but himself can utter "'fully.' Rude as they are, their force is extraordinary; few "things can be more truly magical than the glimpse of distant "sea in the second (IX) of those engraved by Gilchrist. At

"the same time they are not in the least Virgilian, and in this "respect form an instructive contrast with the exquisite "though unfinished Virgilian illustrations of Samuel Palmer." — *William Blake, Painter and Poet*, by Richard Garnett in the *Portfolio* Series of monographs, 8vo., London, October, 1895, pp. 65, 66.

NOTE 5 — PAGE XX

What is not so well known relates to Edward Calvert, another member of the little group of Blake adherents, whose claims to our consideration were first set forth by Mr. Herbert P. Horne in his *Brief Notice of Edward Calvert, Painter and Engraver.* (See *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* for October, 1891.) This was followed two years later by a sumptuous Memoir, by the artist's son, wherein, strangely enough, Mr. Horne's name is not mentioned.

"Some small woodcuts of Blake," wrote Calvert to this son, "are in your possession. . . . They are done as if by a "child; several of them careless and incorrect, yet there is "a spirit in them, humble enough and of force enough to "move simple souls to tears." Further on we are told: "Amongst the Calvert studies in the collection of the British "Museum, we find the subject of one of Blake's little wood-"cuts treated in a most fascinating manner and this in my "father's latest accomplishment of style and colour-harmony. ". . . . This particular idea is perhaps suggested by the fact "that the Philips' pastoral is more complete, if not more "fondled, than are his own Arcadian themes, many of which "remain sketchy and unfinished — or, I may more properly "say, retained in the purity of their suggestiveness. This oil-"colour treatment of Blake's small wood-engraving, is a "quiet, serene picture, possessing that marvellous charm of "colour-treatment which distinguishes Calvert's work from "all others . . . . Curiously enough — and it is most appro-"priate — this subject is that of a pilgrim and a milestone, "(IX) so sacred, and although not originally conceived as "bearing this interpretation, is sufficiently suggestive of "Blake's steadfast pilgrimage on earth, and Calvert's also — "soon to reach the last milestone of his life."—*Memoir of*

Edward Calvert by his Third Son [Samuel Calvert]. Folio, London, 1893. (A limited edition of 350 copies.) Pp. 19, 29, 30.

Note 6 — Page xx

"Although Samuel Palmer did not originally intend to "devote his pencil to Virgil as he had so assiduously devoted "his pen, he had long seen a 'vision' of a very small but "very exquisite etching or wood-cut at the head of every poem. "'If Blake were alive and I could afford it,' he wrote early in "1872, 'I would ask him to make a head-piece to each "'Bucolic. How exquisitely he would have done it we know.'" See preface to *An English Version of the Eclogues of Virgil by Samuel Palmer*, Folio, London, 1883.

It is only a fitting conclusion to our *XVII Designs* to have given the First Eclogue as done into English by Palmer, especially after the unavoidable reprint of Philips' imitation of it for which Blake made his woodcuts.